



## MANAGING POOR PERFORMANCE

### What is Poor Performance?

Poor performance can be exhibited in various ways including:

- Unsatisfactory work performance in terms of quality or quantity;
- Poor attitude which affects work performance;
- Missing of deadlines;
- Poor attendance and/or lateness;
- Poor teamwork and/or people skills affecting work performance and relationships;
- Breach of policies, procedures or practices

While disciplinary action (including termination) may result from an employee's poor performance in certain instances, this fact sheet focuses on identifying more minor performance issues and resolving them – where counselling and coaching is an appropriate resolution.

### Why have a performance management/counselling process?

There are many reasons for having a performance management process including:

- Addressing more minor underperformance issues before they become significant problems
- Giving the employee an opportunity to know exactly why they are underperforming and exactly how to improve
- To ensure employees that other employees see that underperformance is addressed and not accepted
- To ensure the same process is applied impartially every time – negating claims of discrimination
- To assist the employer in the event poor performance leads to termination, by establishing the employers reasonable efforts to address the situation
- In short, to fix the problem and move forward in a positive manner

### The process to address poor performance

#### Step 1 – Determine exactly what the problem is

Before meeting to discuss an issue of underperformance, the employer should know exactly what the poor performance is and why it is poor performance. For example:

- Is the position description not being adhered to?
- Is the employee arriving late?
- Is the employee failing to follow a process or policy? What process or policy?

## Step 2 – Review the problem

The employer should determine:

- specifically when failure to perform adequately occurred
- specifically why the performance is inadequate
- what documents, processes, policies (if any) can be referred to
- how serious they believe the problem is

Having determined all of these issues the employer should organise a meeting with the employee to discuss and attempt to resolve the issue of poor performance.

## Step 3 – Meet with the employee to discuss the problem

At the meeting the employer should explain the problem in *specific terms*. The employee needs to clearly understand the problem including:

- what the problem is
- why it is a problem
- what is expected of them
- why it is expected of them
- any documentation which specifies or clarifies the issues (PD)
- how their poor performance impacts on the workplace

Where applicable, it is appropriate to acknowledge the employee's contribution and positive performance in respect to other aspects of their role in this discussion. This ensures employees understand that the employer is aware of good performance as well as underperformance and makes it more likely they will participate in the solution.

## Step 4 – Determine a solution

Wherever possible, it is better to reach a solution in conjunction with the employee as they are thereafter much more likely to take ownership of it and implement it. The reality is however, if a solution can't be reached in conjunction with the employee the employer will need to determine one – but only after discussion with the employee

If a skill shortage is identified it may be worthwhile offering further training.

In any event, the employee should be in no doubt as to what the solution is.

## Step 5 – Develop a clear action plan to implement the solution

The action plan should:

- clarify performance expectations and accountabilities
- clarify exactly what the employee must do
- what time frame for improvement is agreed or imposed
- include a date for review of progress and/or achievement of the action plan

Both parties should sign the action plan to evidence their agreement and commitment to the plan. If the employee refuses to sign the action plan shall proceed in any event.

### Step 6 – Monitor employee performance and meet to review

The employer should genuinely monitor and consider the performance issue during the review period and comply with the agreed review date by meeting to review and discuss the employee's performance.

Where the performance issue is addressed this should be acknowledged and agreed. If however the performance issue is not addressed formal counselling or warning may be necessary. In cases of serious misconduct termination may be required. Before terminating any employee we suggest you speak with IR Assist.

IR Assist can advise at every stage of the counselling or disciplinary process.



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**If you have any questions regarding this fact sheet or would like assistance regarding IR/HR/OHS contact IR Assist for more information:**

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